

DATELINE NO. 60 MILWAUKEE  
FRED COOPER

FEBRUARY 18, 1976

CONCERNED CONSUMERS LEAGUE

(INSERTS AND UN CUT INTERVIEW IN TAPE LIBRARY)

(INSERTS

ANNCR: AND NOW, THE VOICE OF AMERICA PRESENTS DATELINE. . .

ANOTHER IN THE SERIES OF PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES AND  
EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. AND HERE IS \_\_\_\_\_ WITH  
A REPORT BY FRED COOPER ON A CONSUMER GROUP THAT SOLVES  
COMPLAINTS ACROSS THE BARGAINING TABLE.

NARR: CONSUMERS WHO LIVE IN MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN AND HAVE HAD  
PROBLEMS WITH MERCHANTS AND MECHANICAL REPAIR SHOPS HAVE  
FOUND THAT IT'S WORTHWHILE TALKING WITH DAVID MATZ. HE'S  
THE DIRECTOR OF MILWAUKEE'S CONCERNED CONSUMERS LEAGUE. . .

TAPE: CUT ONE -- DAVID MATZ

"THE CONCERNED CONSUMERS LEAGUE IS A COMMUNITY ACTION  
PROGRAM THAT DEALS WITH CONSUMER EDUCATION AND PROTECTION  
ON EVERY CONCEIVABLE LEVEL . . . WE'RE TALKING ABOUT  
UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLE REPAIR, CREDIT PROBLEMS, CONTRACT  
PROBLEMS, HEALTH INSURANCE PROBLEMS: IT'S A SOUP\_TO\_NUTS  
(COMPREHENSIVE) TYPE OF SITUATION."

NARR: THE FOUR YEAR OLD CONCERNED CONSUMERS LEAGUE OF MILWAUKEE  
IS NOT A GOVERNMENT AGENCY. IT BEGAN AS AN INFORMAL GROUP  
ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE CITY, ORGANIZED TO SOLVE BUSINESSMAN-  
CONSUMER DISAGREEMENTS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, WITH THE LEAST  
EXPENDITURE OF TIME AND MONEY -- AND WITHOUT HAVING TO RESORT  
TO LEGAL ACTION. TODAY, THE LEAGUE HAS FOUR TO FIVE HUNDRED  
MEMBERS. ANYONE IN MILWAUKEE, CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF  
CONCERNED CONSUMERS' SERVICES BY PAYING THE SMALL MEMBERSHIP  
FEE -- A FEE WHICH OFTEN IS WAIVED IN THE CASES OF POOR  
PEOPLE.

DAVID MATZ SAYS THE MOSTLY-VOLUNTEER STAFF OF THE LEAGUE IS  
WELL VERSED IN THE CONSUMER PROTECTION LAWS, AND THAT THE  
LEAGUE DOES ACT AS A CONSUMER ADVOCATE. BUT THEY MUCH

NARR: PREFER TO HANDLE CONSUMER COMPLAINTS BY ACTING AS MEDIATORS  
(CONT'D) IN NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN CONSUMER AND MERCHANT:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- MATZ

"OUR FIRST QUESTION INVARIABLY IS: WHAT HAVE YOU DONE IN ORDER TO GIVE THE OTHER SIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO RIGHT THE WRONG? THIS IS THE FIRST STEP. ASSUMING THAT YOU HAVE GIVEN THEM A REASONABLE OPPORTUNITY TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM ON THEIR OWN AND THEY HAVEN'T, THEN WE WOULD INVITE YOU DOWN TO OUR HEADQUARTERS AND FILE A COMPLAINT AND A STRATEGY WOULD BE MAPPED OUT. PERHAPS ALL THE INVESTIGATION INVOLVES IS A CONFERENCE BETWEEN BOTH SIDES, OVER THE TABLE, AMICABLY SETTLED."

NARR: THESE NEGOTIATING SESSIONS USUALLY INCLUDE, NOT ONLY THE BUSINESSMAN AND THE CONSUMER, BUT ALSO AN AUTHORITY ON THE BUSINESS INVOLVED. MISTER MATZ SAYS THAT MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, A SETTLEMENT IS REACHED DURING THE CONFERENCE BECAUSE A SATISFIED CUSTOMER IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS.

IF THE FACE-TO-FACE MEETING IS A FAILURE OR IF A BUSINESSMAN REFUSES TO NEGOTIATE AT ALL, THE CONCERNED CONSUMERS' LEAGUE WILL HELP SOMEONE WITH A VALID COMPLAINT TAKE THE MATTER TO GOVERNMENT CONSUMER PROTECTION AGENCIES. THEY ALSO SUGGEST OTHER MEANS. DAVID MATZ EXPLAINS:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- MATZ

"FIRST OF ALL WE TRY TO EXHAUST EVERY POSSIBLE REMEDY THROUGH NEGOTIATION. IF THIS FAILS, THEN WE EITHER RECOMMEND THE CLIENT-CONSUMER TO GO AHEAD AND PURSUE THE CASE IN SMALL CLAIMS COURT. IF THAT'S NOT PALATABLE TO THE CONSUMER, THEN WE EXPLAIN TO THAT PERSON THAT THERE IS PEACEFUL INFORMATION PICKETING. SO HE WOULD THROW A PICKET LINE AROUND THE BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENT, WE WOULD CONFORM TO ALL RULES AND REGULATIONS OF A DEMONSTRATION AND WE WOULD BE CERTAIN TO KEEP IT PEACEFUL.

NARR: A PICKET LINE IS TRULY THE LEAGUE'S LAST RESORT. MEMBERS DEMONSTRATE IN FRONT OF THE RECALCITRANT BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENT AND EXPLAIN TO PROSPECTIVE CUSTOMERS WHAT

NARR: THE CONSUMER'S COMPLAINT IS. IN MANY CASES, JUST THE  
(CONT'D) THREAT OF A PICKET LINE IS ENOUGH TO BRING A BUSINESSMAN  
TO THE BARGAINING TABLE.

BUT MISTER MATZ SAYS PICKETING IS RARE, BOTH BECAUSE THE  
LEAGUE HAS A REPUTATION FOR FAIRNESS IN DEALING WITH  
CONSUMER-BUSINESS DISAGREEMENTS AND BECAUSE TODAY'S  
BUSINESSMAN IS MORE WILLING TO RECOGNIZE CONSUMER RIGHTS.

HOWEVER, THE BEST WAY TO HANDLE PROBLEMS IS TO PREVENT  
THEM. AND THAT'S WHERE THE CONCERNED CONSUMERS' LEAGUE'S  
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM COMES IN:

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- MATZ

"OUR MAJOR THRUST ASIDE FROM PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY HAS  
BEEN EDUCATION. WE'RE CONVINCED THAT CONSUMER EDUCATION  
. . . HAS BEEN NEGLECTED IN THE PAST. WE NEED TO TEACH  
VERY BASIC IMPORTANT SKILLS TO YOUNG AND OLD AND WE FEEL  
THAT IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A FOOTHOLD IN THE COMMUNITY  
WE WANT TO START SPREADING OUT AND CONDUCTING AS MANY  
WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS AND PERHAPS EVEN SYMPOSIA AS POSSIBLE,  
IN ORDER TO ALERT CONSUMERS TO WHAT THEIR RIGHTS, REMEDIES  
AND OBLIGATIONS ARE, IN THE MARKETPLACE."

NARR: AND, DAVID MATZ SAYS, HE IS FAIRLY OPTIMISTIC THAT  
ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE CONSUMER'S LEAGUE CAN HELP IMPROVE  
THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE MARKETPLACE AS WELL.

ANNCR: A REPORT ON THE CONCERNED CONSUMERS' LEAGUE OF MILWAUKEE --  
WORKING TOWARDS BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN BUSINESSMEN AND  
THE COMMUNITY THEY SERVE. JOIN US AGAIN FOR ANOTHER  
DATELINE REPORT NEXT \_\_\_\_\_ (AT THIS TIME). THIS IS

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WJL/RTD